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ABSTRACT

Public information campaigns serve a primary role in contemporary American society to promote more active citizen involvement. When the U.S. government seeks to influence its citizens, it can use mass media to help produce systematic social change, particularly visual communication derived from rhetoric. Rhetorical criticism includes non-discursive forms of communication, or communication through visual forms, that engage attention, transmit information, and evoke audience responses. The McGruff "Take a Bite Out of Crime" public information campaign is examined to present a methodology for assessing the content of the visual messages, and meaning and patterns are derived from this specific campaign. Insight is provided into the development of the campaign by outlining the various visual and verbal rhetoric found within the public service advertisements (PSAs) and how they reinforce or detract from the goals for the McGruff effort. Overall, the McGruff PSAs appear to have communicated with their audiences in a fresh and memorable way. Specific aspects of the campaign that aided in raising awareness, reinforcing existing behaviors, and developing motivation among viewers relied on two important elements: (1) emphasis on the individual and his or her community; and (2) audience identification with McGruff. (Contains 24 references.) (AEF)

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A RHETORICAL APPROACH TO NON-DISCURSIVE MESSAGES IN INFORMATION CAMPAIGNS

by
Kathleen Reid

Public information campaigns have informed and mobilized the American public for more than two centuries. Early efforts were developed primarily by strong, independent individuals who persuaded their followers to particular actions, and by the nineteenth century, these individuals and their followers had developed significant strategies, including grass-roots organizing, legislative testimony, use of mass communication, and confrontation. Priority topics at that time centered upon reform, such as the abolition movement, women's suffrage, and temperance campaigns. The popularity of contemporary American public information campaigns has continued to thrive throughout this century, but with a dominant shift toward the role of the mass media in the information dissemination process. Most recently, public communication campaigns have sought to inform, persuade, or motivate large audiences, usually for noncommercial benefits, with a specified time frame, by organized communication efforts that involve extensive use of the mass media complemented by interpersonal communication (Rogers & Storey, 1987).

As this suggests, public information campaigns serve a primary role in contemporary American society to promote more active citizen involvement in varying dimensions of society. Specifically, when the U.S. government seeks to influence its citizens, it uses the mass media to develop systematic social change. As such, information campaigns become forms "of social intervention prompted by a determination that some situation represents a social problem meriting social action" (Salmon, 1989, p. 20). Today, these campaigns address such diverse issues as health, traffic safety, environmental concerns, and crime prevention.

Dissemination of pertinent campaign information is most often through public service advertisements (PSAs). Sponsorship of most PSAs emanate from not-for-profit or governmental organizations. They receive *gratis* placement in both the broadcast and print media. Because of this free media placement, most do not receive the same status in placement as do regular paid advertisements or commercials. In fact, more appear only as space or time permit with a recently growing number of exceptions (ABC, 1986; Hanneman, McEwen, & Coyne, 1973). O'Keefe and Reid (1990) found that the public is fairly attentive to PSAs, especially those over television and, for the most part, the audience have favorable reactions to them.

Much of the developments of these recent campaign efforts have been through the support and direction of social science. The primary contributions of the social scientists have been in grounding the campaigns in theory, as well as in planning, conducting, and evaluating these efforts (Paisley, 1989). As this suggests, much of the evaluation effort of public campaigns has been upon audience response; however, as works such as that of Grunig and Grunig (1990) and Salmon (1989) indicate, even the strongest social science efforts regarding campaign strategies and development remain at best part art, part science. In light of this, a recent move in evaluations of the campaigns has been to recognize a need for a careful examination not only of the audience, but also the content of both the verbal and visual messages found within

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information campaigns.

In this paper, the McGruff "Take a Bite Out of Crime" public information campaign will be examined to provide students and practitioners who develop such campaigns with a methodology for assessing the content of the visual messages they develop for their varying publics. Secondly, this paper seeks to demonstrate what meaning and patterns can be derived from this specific campaign. As Dondis (1974) acknowledges, viewers attempt to organize visual materials. They seek to establish visual patterns that result in intersubjectivity between the creator and receiver of the message. The strength of the organization of the visual elements will determine the clarity of the messages.

A Rhetorical Perspective

One otentially useful ers ective for analyzing the meaning and patterns behind a form of visual communication is derived from rhetoric. Historically, rhetoric has been confined to the study of discursive communication, but, recently, rhetorical criticism has been expanded to include non-discursive elements. These non-discursive forms of communication are deemed parallel to discourse in that they engage our attention, transmit information, and evoke responses from the audience in ways similar to discourse. Here the non-discursive is defined as communication through visual forms such as videography, film, photography, and painting.

That such human activity is within the purview of rhetorical criticism was suggested by the Committee on the Advancement and Refinement of Rhetorical Criticism (Sharf, 1979), which reported that the rhetorical critic "studies his subject in terms of its suasory potential or persuasive effect. So identified, rhetorical criticism may be applied to any human act, process, product, or artifact" (Sharf 1979, p. 21). Karlyn Kohrs Campbell (1974) echoed this sentiment by asserting that "if criticism is to fulfill its function, the rhetorical critic must proclaim: Nothing that is human symbolization is alien to me" (p. 14).

Using the simplest definition, Foss and Radich (1980) indicate that visual communication is within the scope of rhetoric because it is a "conscious production to evoke a response" (p. 47). Burke (1964) adds credence to this view by noting that when visual communication captures our attention, we are as drawn and involved in the communicative relationship as that which "prevails between a pitchman and a prospective customer" (p. 106).

This perspective that parallels the discursive and non-discursive is one that historically can be found with the study of visual arts. Through the years, scholars such as Egbert (1944) in studies of aesthetics and art history have emphasized that visual communication must be understood in rhetorical terms. Gombrich (1960) takes this a step further by noting that good articulation is essential for good communication no matter the form of the rhetorical process: "All human communication is through symbols, through the medium of a language [he includes the visual arts in his notion of language] and the more articulate that language the greater the chance for the message to get through" (p. 385).

These and other theorists hold that visual communicators use their techniques as a medium of rhetoric for expressing ideas and experience just as verbal rhetoric functions to express the experiences of the speaker (e.g., Arnheim, 1971; Kleinbauer, 1971).

Further evidence for the treatment of visual forms as parallel to verbal ones can be found in schools such as the Prague Structuralists that reinforce the phenomenological position that both verbal and visual rhetoric function as social artifacts in the communication process. This work examines how the relationship between creator of an artifact and the interpreter function to form society. This work, especially that of Lotman (1976)

and Mukarovsky (1977), presents both verbal and visual communication as part of the communication process that constitutes our entire social system (Bailey, Matejka, & Steiner, 1980; Lotman 1976; Lucid, 1944; Morawsky, 1974; Mukarovsky, 1977).

Brief Summary of McGruff Campaign

The McGruff "Take a Bite Out of Crime" campaign was conceived in 1979. It has been active with new PSAs developed for each of its fifteen phases. Each phase emphasized specific aspects of crime and violence prevention for varying constituencies of the American public. From its inception, the overall campaign established three purposes: (a) To educate the public, (b) to convince citizens that they can help reduce crime, and (c) to offer clear advice to take direct action for crime prevention. These purposes were based on the assumption and belief that crime prevention can increase substantially the quality of life for everyone. Furthermore, the basic premise of the campaign stressed that if crime prevention were to work, it must originate within communities and be sparked and supported by educational and governmental systems.

As a result of this philosophy, the crime prevention campaign was centered around the cartoon figure, McGruff, the detective dog who "takes a bite out of crime." McGruff functioned as a teacher who did not solve crime but taught people how to help themselves. Most often, he was perceived to be totally trustworthy, never intimidating. He created intense loyalty and believability, especially among children. As a result of audience targeting and consistent dissemination, the campaign has been deemed highly successful. In the process, McGruff, the central figure of most of the PSAs, has become one of the most recognized and trusted public symbols of the 1980s.

The high recognition of the McGruff figure raises the question of what kinds of images and themes are presented in the PSAs to make the Crime Dog so apparently symbolic and identifiable. An examination of the content of the PSAs, both verbal and visual, will document the themes, messages, and appeals that have been conveyed by the campaign since its inception. This analysis will reveal the content that audiences have been exposed to, and how the PSAs establish for the audience a common viewpoint or *world view* that accounts for the role of the individual and community in the fight against crime. The extent that identification and common world view are established between the cartoon character and the audience determines the success of the symbolic functions of McGruff.

Methodology

The formal term for the method used here is cluster analysis (Burke, 1954, 1957). This is a qualitative method involving a structural analysis of the discursive and non-discursive elements of the PSAs. Discursive elements incorporate such elements as layout design, sound effects, tone of voice, and visual elements. Visual elements include design components such as light, color, form, and setting.

Cluster analysis notes that one key to systematizing the varying elements in this PSAs lies in a examination of what elements are presented and juxtaposed against one another. This requires an examination of the basic structure of each and what kind of meaning is developed by the viewer. These varying elements are assessed simultaneously. To establish meaning, cluster analysis examines the structure of the PSAs to determine what elements are associated with what other elements. Cluster analysis asks, "What follows what?" and is concerned with the examination of elements that are linked together by the producers of these PSAs. Cluster analysis establishes the key ideas found in the PSAs and indicates the basic, clearly defined symbols along with the connotative meanings of these symbols as they are established within the announcements themselves.

Cluster analysis consists of three steps. The first is the selection of key terms, or the important element used in the PSA. The key terms are selected because of their high frequency and/or high intensity of use. Frequency refers to how often the term is repeated, and intensity refers to how significant the term appears to be in the announcement. Key terms in these PSAs refer to the words and to the design elements, such as color, form, value, line, and music. The second step is to identify what clusters around, or what ideas are associated with, each key term each time it appears in a PSA. This is a description of what elements are adjacent to or in close radius to each key term. The third step is the interpretation of the clusters. In this step, each cluster is analyzed to determine what messages are included in the PSA. The interpretations of each cluster then are examined as a whole to determine an overall interpretation of the PSA or group of PSAs being examined.

McGruff Campaign Analysis

Since McGruff's inception in 1980, PSAs have been developed that focus on varying themes. Three typical ones include (a) home security/neighborhood watch, (b) crime prevention for a safer community, and (c) children's drug abuse prevention. Each theme area includes a specific grouping of PSAs which will be discussed in turn below.

"Home Security/Neighborhood Watch." Clusters and Interpretation

The home security/neighborhood watch PSAs were distributed in 1980-81 as the first of the McGruff series. These messages appeared on television and radio, and in print in newspapers and magazines, and on billboards, transit cards, and posters. The messages were aimed at adults. The purpose of the ads was to introduce and to encourage the American population to assume responsibility for protecting their homes, and to join with neighbors in doing so. There primary clusters are revealed in these ads: real-life settings and situations, clear action, and McGruff the Crime Dog.

Real-Life Settings and Situations. The real-life settings contain visuals that emphasize the ordinary aspects of the individual's life. The rooms or neighborhood streets that are shown are pleasant and orderly. Even the ordinary moving van used by the criminals in the "Gilstraps" (1981) ad implies how an ordinary setting can unsuspectingly contain elements of crime. In the first "Stop a Crime" (1980) announcements, the darkness of the traditional sitting room in the home of an average middle-class citizen, is turned, literally as well as symbolically, to light with the arrival of McGruff the Crime Dog. In "Mimi Marth" (1981), suspicious actions occur in an everyday street and are halted by a typical elderly woman who has been trained to call the police when she observes unsavory behavior.

Action. Crime-prevention action, such as this simple act presented in the "Mimi Marth" (1981) PSA, is a key element in the home security/neighborhood watch series. The characteristics that cluster around the actions in these public announcements tend to be primarily basic, everyday activities, which can be followed by any individual. The print ad version of "Mimi Marth" (1981) emphasizes this. It is a portrait of an average-looking elderly woman phoning for help, a simple act preventing a major crime. The "Gilstraps" call the police in the televised PSA; again, a simple action to save their neighbor's home from being robbed. The print version of this ad does not so clearly indicate this. Only a small boy in the middle-ground of the photograph intervenes in the burglary. He seems too small to assume this responsibility alone. In contrast, simple use of the telephone in the video version empowers the family so that they are not acting alone but with a broader support system.

As these examples suggest, no special courage, skill, or feat is required to perform the actions advocated in this series

of ads. These are not spectacular behaviors but are simple actions contained in everyday life, such as turning on lights, locking doors, using the telephone. And it is ordinary people who are performing these routine tasks.

McGruff. The items and ideas that cluster around McGruff the Crime Dog include his dissemination of information and community concern, along with his trench coat and security. Also included are his presentation of positive, simple directions and his emphasis upon individual responsibility for the prevention of crime. This cartoon figure is the detective who "takes a bite out of crime," a brief, but highly descriptive summary of the agenda for this campaign. His clear directives present him as a teacher, not so much as a trench-coated sleuth and detective who is out to solve a specific crime. In both the print and video ads, McGruff's trench-coated image makes him a trusted investigator with solutions to problems about crime. His gentle features and his gravelly voice make him an authority to be trusted and believed; he is not intimidating, visually or verbally.

The clusters that appear in these ads stress the significance of individual action in everyday circumstances and settings. This suggests that the individual can play a powerful role in the prevention of crime in his or her life, home, and community. Strength to the individual is imparted through his or her actions which are based upon the recommendations of the crime-prevention expert, McGruff.

"Crime Prevention for a Safer Community." Clusters and Interpretation

The Crime Prevention for a Safer Community PSAs were distributed throughout the ten years of the McGruff campaign, and constitute the most pervasive of the campaign themes. They appeared in print as early as 1981 and first appeared on television and radio in 1982. New messages carrying this theme were introduced each year from 1986 to 1991. The purpose was to teach individuals to protect not just their homes, but innocent individuals when away from their homes. They also advocated keeping streets free of crime, protection at the work sites, prevention of vandalism and arson. All of these stressed the role of crime prevention in varying dimensions of community life. The PSAs were aimed predominantly at the adult audience.

Like the previous theme, the primary clusters of these ads were the settings, clear action, and McGruff the Crime Dog. In addition, these ads emphasized varying types of criminals and the citizens, characterized by both empowerment and vulnerability.

Setting. Once again, many of the settings of the PSAs are ordinary everyday elements. For example, the "Fred McGillicudy" print ad shows an easy chair, dog, pipe, mounted fish, rug, slippers, and newspaper. These household items are ordinary elements of everyday life in America, and they represent the safety and security of the traditional home. These are transferred visually to the external environment by the placement of these items literally on the street with street light and "No Parking" sign. The visual statement is that the street is as safe and secure as one's home. The result is a sense of order and control over both the internal and external environments. Similarly, the print ad for "The Philly Story" depicts a common garden plant waiting to be planted, an ordinary plant and an ordinary task. It reflects the simplicity of simple control over life. Simple plant, simple action combats the confusion and darkness of crime which results in a better community.

The settings for a number of PSAs in this category were night: "John Petross" (1982-83), "Most Criminals Prefer to Stay out of the Limelight" (1986), "He's Moving to Your Neighborhood" (1989), and "Fred McGillicudy" (1989). Each indicates the traditional symbol of darkness as depicting evil in our society. With the darkness clusters concepts of

helplessness and powerlessness, and, with the light, clusters concepts of empowerment to overcome the evil force as seen in the "John Petross" (1982-83) televised message.

Action. Action here includes power through seeing and recognizing. "How to Catch a Thief" (1981) teaches individual responsibility by training the average citizen to learn to look for and identify a thief. This print ad in its simple presentation reflects the simplicity of just *seeing* the suspicious, criminal activity and then reporting it to the police. A second print ad also emphasizes power through the act of recognition. You can gain power through your act of recognition. Having knowledge is empowering. Whether it is recognizing that arsonists are potential killers or recognizing a thief, as in the print ad "How to Catch a Thief," you gain control by the act of recognizing them for what they are--"an arsonist is not just an arsonist but potential killer" (1981 print ad).

While these print ads were direct and informative, other print ads emphases in the visual presentations were on the criminal's action, not that of the citizen. As a result, the visual's action in the print ads was fear created by the drama and action of the criminal while the television video stressed the action of the citizen. For example in the John Petross print ad, the crook was shown beating down the door. In the television version, the act of beating down the door was followed by John Petross' response and action of establishing a Neighborhood Watch program. In just two years, this action was said to have caused crime to drop 55% and property values to double in that community. Yet the print ad did not stress this in its visuals. It only painted a picture of the negative action of the burglar. Only fear created the drama in the print ad, while in the televised version, action and drama came from John Petross' behavior in response to the violence.

This emphasis on the negative and fear is repeated in the 1989 print ad, "He's Moving to Your Neighborhood." Emphasis is on the criminal action, not on the action of the citizen. In the print ad, the photo catches the drama of a criminal frozen in the action of staking out an elderly woman who is walking alone. Sitting in his automobile, he appears in control of the situation as he sits, waiting to pounce. The same problem appears in the "To Fight Crime in Philly" PSA presented in 1989. In the televised version, the action is transformation in people's lives as pride in their neighborhood returns and as they reclaim the physical space in their neighborhood.

What had once been vacant lots, broken windows, and abandoned automobiles, now have been transformed into gardens and well-lit, clean spaces. The print version emphasized the action of gardening with a modest plant waiting to be planted. The soil and a gardening tool seem to wait to be moved by the viewer of the ad. This print ad emphasizes a living plant growing in good soil, symbolic of a living human being, thriving in a safe community. This contrasts with the previous print ads which emphasized the criminal action and the vulnerability of the elderly citizen.

McGruff. The clusters around the McGruff figure contain the elements of a mentor like those in the "Home Security/Neighborhood Watch" series described earlier. Clusters around the concept of credibility were added in this theme. One of the clusters establishing credibility is McGruff in the role of celebrity, portrayed in the "Cavett" (1986-87) PSA. McGruff gains celebrity status and significance by association with the media figure Dick Cavett. Credibility is established not only through this association, but by mimicking the interview format, which is used to recognize important contributors to our culture. McGruff gains added credibility through longevity in the anniversary celebrations of the Crime Dog and his role in crime prevention of the last decade ("Anniversary: Working Together: This is Your Life, 1990 televised PSA, etc.).

Criminals. The early ads defined the criminal specifically, such as in 1981 thieves and arsonists were listed. The ideas clustering around these print ads were criminals who are weasels, sneaky, and potential killers. According to the 1986 "Most Criminals Prefer to Stay out of the Limelight" print ad, the words clustering around the criminals are *shady* characters who like the dark. The results are "feelings of helplessness and resentment" ("To Fight Crime in Philly," 1989).

Citizens. The descriptions of citizens found in this series of announcements fall into two categories: (a) empowered, highly effective combatants of crime, and (b) vulnerable potential victims. The ratio of PSAs that empowered the individual versus depicting human vulnerability is seven to five. At points, this presented mixed messages, especially in the print ads. While the televised ads have the potential to demonstrate both characteristics, i.e., a vulnerable victim transformed to empowered combatant ("John Petross," 1982-83), the print ads depict one or the other. "How to Catch a Thief" (1981) and "Don't Let the Arsonist Get Away With Murder" (1981) both empower the individual with knowledge. "Tucson Tip-Off" (1990) gives the individuals' names and describes them as "sensitive, highly sophisticated surveillance equipment," implying that these people are highly effective in the fight against crime.

In contrast, others of the PSAs stressed the vulnerability of being human. The 1989 "Most Criminals Prefer to Stay out of the Limelight" print ad depicts the neighborhood as not a safe place and indicates that the elderly woman walking alone is vulnerable with no protection. As she is watched by the thief in his automobile, the elderly woman's vulnerability clearly supports the headline that: "He's moving to your neighborhood because of all its advantages: unsupervised children, idle teenagers, the elderly alone, broken street lights, broken windows" (1989).

Vulnerability also shown in the 1988 "Want to Cut Down Crime? Mind your own Business" print ad. Here the individuals are not faceless statistics or casualties of crime, but real people with real signatures, photographs, and company logos on their employee identification cards. These are not isolated individuals, but real people who are part of a collective whole and who play a vital role in the function of the organization. In this PSA, the employee identification cards are ordinary, everyday items that stand for real-life, vulnerable human beings.

Vulnerability is also found in the 1988 print ad to prevent vandalism. "All dressed up with no place to go" describes the couple set to attend their senior prom. Their formal dress contrasts with the broken windows and graffiti of the stone school building in the background. The broken windows and lost dreams of the couple symbolize the brokenness and vulnerability of human existence. Internal vulnerability is depicted not only in broken dreams, but also in human existence. For example, failure to lock the car makes the individual vulnerable to car theft through his or her own neglect ("You're Probably Wondering Why Your Car Was Stolen," 1989 print ad).

"Children's Drug Abuse Prevention" Clusters and Interpretation

The children's drug abuse prevention PSAs were distributed in 1987-89. Four categories of PSAs relating to this theme appeared on television and radio and in print. All four were aimed primarily at children, with two of the four also geared for parents. The primary purpose of the announcements was to persuade children to say "no" to drugs and to alert parents to the potential danger their children may be in because of drug use and related violence. The key elements of these messages were the setting, action, and McGruff.

Setting. The settings in these PSAs are in two categories. The "Real

Situations" (1989, televised) series of announcements use real-life settings and situations to teach children to say no to drugs. Most of these locations were in a school setting, outside the classroom, suggesting that drug use is a real problem faced daily by children. The print ads in this series are non-threatening. The settings are simple: worried parents ("1 out of 2 Teens in American Has Taken Drugs," 1988) and telephone, writing pad, and binoculars ("Everything You Need to Close Down a Crackhouse," 1989). Clustered around these elements are information about crime prevention and drug abuse that is simple to read and understand.

Other settings in this series were not real-life settings or situations. For example, in the print ad cartoon figures of children holding the McGruff mask ("Saying No Isn't Tough," 1988) are used instead of a photograph of real children. The "Winners Are Losers" ("Memphis," 1987) televised spots juxtaposes an indoor item, a piano, in an outdoor setting of an open field. Children and adults follow the sound of the music, reenacting the image of folklore of the Pied Piper. The "Masks" (1988) spot continues this theme as the children cluster around the piano listening to McGruff. The fantasy world can continue as the children hide behind their McGruff masks. The setting of "Regina" (1988) completes the move from real-life settings and situations. Here the set is composed of changing abstract images and a female singer dressed in a contemporary, exaggerated style.

Action. In the midst of routine actions and settings, school-aged children are interspersed with opportunities for the children to use drugs. Each setting presents the child with enough fortitude to "Just say no" to drugs. The action is the act of saying "no" and walking away from the situation. The everyday routines suggested how easy it was for students to participate in drug use, and simultaneously, how simple statements constitute action to effectively prevent drug abuse. The action in the "Winners Are Losers" (1987) ad is the emotive response to the music. In the "Masks" (1988), the children's action is again following the emotive music, but also, by hiding behind the fantasy world of masks, the children may be able to carry out the action of "Just Saying No to Drugs." However, in the "Regina" (1988) PSA, the action shifts from McGruff's plea to "Just Say No to Drugs" to the singer's exaggerated style, which stimulates the emotive experience of MTV for a younger audience.

McGruff. In this series of ads, McGruff has decreased in visual and verbal prominence in some of the print versions. For example, in the "1 Out of 2 Teens in America Has Taken Drugs" (1988) PSA, he has been relegated to a less significant position on the page and to a much smaller logo. In the others, he has maintained his traditional role of teacher. The primary difference now is that the advice is much less specific. "Just say no" is a generic phrase that is much more nebulous and less easy to apply than simple acts, such as locking doors or turning on lights. McGruff seems to be closer to a light-hearted friend and musician. How well he functions as a mentor regarding crime prevention is difficult to assess.

Overall, this segment of the McGruff campaign begins to move away from everyday items and routine actions. While it is simple to "say no," an apparently clear directive, the problem is in the ambiguity of the individual situations that a child faces. The situation may be as ambiguous as a cocked gun; it may or may not go off, just as a child may or may not have the ability in that moment to say no. Overall, these messages move toward a fantasy world of emotional and experiential settings.

Overall Interpretation of Primary Clusters in PSAs

Overall, the PSAs are visually uncluttered and straightforward. The verbal messages are presented in a concise conversational tone. A recurring idea

throughout many of the announcements is a stamp of ownership--*your door, your house, your child, your community.* This ownership establishes the individual's identity and membership within the local community. This identity within the community is combined with personal action and responsibility to create a central focus revealed through the primary themes of the major clusters--the settings, characters, and actions.

Setting. For the most part, the clusters surrounding the settings present the lifestyles with which traditional American families can identify. The furnishings are comfortable and the decorations familiar. This familiarity also creates a stamp of ownership. The lighting used in many of the settings switches from darkness to light. This parallels visually the transition that can occur in communities as individuals follow the prescribed crime prevention behaviors so that their neighborhoods are dominated by light and goodness, not darkness and crime. The light within the settings and the stamp of ownership, establishing the individual's or community's "territory" (e.g., "Mimi Marth," 1981), combined with the concepts of prevention so that the overall settings are not those of fear, but those which remind individuals of their control and power of the environment.

Characters. The characters presented in all the PSAs are defined clearly and consistently: The perpetrators of crime who will destroy the viewer's or listener's home, family, or community; the mentor who is the detective-dog McGruff; and the potential hero, the average citizen who is at risk. The perpetrators of crime are not always shown in the PSAs, but they are always alluded to. When shown in PSAs like the "Gilstraps" (1981), they are portrayed as normal workers moving furniture. In the "John Petross Neighborhood Watch" PSA (1982), they are portrayed in a more violent fashion. The violence is kept brief, and the focus quickly shifts to the cooperative action of members of the community as they organize themselves to monitor their neighborhood. For the most part, the criminals are presented as opportunists--"all crime needs is a chance." They are looking for an easy way to invade the individual's home or attack a member of his or her family. For the most part, they are persons who like the dark--"lights make burglars nervous." They are persons who prefer uninhabited, lonely places and avoid communities and homes that look "lived in."

The major character of most of the PSAs is McGruff, the Crime Dog. Wearing a detective's garb, this main figure embodies two major concepts. The first reflects the common understanding of a dog as a person's "best friend" and "protector." He is fearless, courageous, and loyal. The dog's trench coat reminds the viewer of detectives who move from the world of light to the shadowy world of crime seeking good for the community as he removes the potential for crime. Even with such a mission, McGruff is always portrayed as being *human.* For example, in the "Stop a Crime" PSA (1980), McGruff's penchant for sweets and concern for gaining weight--"Fudge brownies! And me on a diet"--place a common personal concern against a broader, more threatening social concern of crime. The result is a sense of identification between viewer and McGruff.

The detective dog's roles are clearly defined as those of teacher and advisor, and McGruff is the one who consistently provides important information about steps for protection behaviors. McGruff is portrayed as a wise person who knows the ways of the world and who also advises the audience in a gently chiding manner. This authority figure has the characteristics of an all-important mentor--one who knows the answers, understands both sides, combats evil, and cares for those who he guides.

The third group generally portrayed in the PSAs is the potential heroes. These are the people who have within them the power to prevent crime. The potential

heroes are portrayed as average citizens who are sometimes forgetful, "It's a funny thing. A lot of people do that. . .they forget." The citizens live, for the most part, in communities where they can trust, or learn to trust, their neighbors and can have a common concern for *clearing* their neighborhoods of crime. This is enacted through active neighborhood cooperation, not just passive acceptance of crime as the accepted standard within the community.

In the PSAs, these citizens have the potential to act against crime if they believe in and follow the simple steps advocated by McGruff. As they prevent crime in their own neighborhoods and lives, they can become heroes. This goal, to "take a bite out of crime," is a noble one that reflects the individuals' struggles to make their own communities better places to live. The overall portrayal within the PSAs is that of a dominate mentor who provides sage advice for individuals. As a result, they have the potential to control what happens and improve the level of safety and security in their communities.

Action. The clusters within the PSAs advocate four important categories of action: (a) increased awareness of crime prevention techniques; (b) changes in attitudes regarding crime prevention, personal involvement in and personal responsibility for crime prevention; (c) specific behaviors that can be implemented to prevent crime; and (d) creation of stronger community ties to create healthier, crime-free neighborhoods.

The recommendations regarding these categories of action are simple, logical, easily remember, and accomplished. For the most part, they are from an offensive position, except for the defensive behaviors portrayed in PSAs like "Mimi Marth" (1981) and "John Petross" (1982-83). The underlying assumption is that if citizens will follow the advised actions, they will gain control over their environments by preventing crimes of convenience.

Because of the clarity of information and instructions, the four categories of actions work together to motivate citizens to pursue knowledge of crime prevention and enact them in their communities. Primarily they function to raise awareness of potential danger, the first category of action. They assert that by being aware of potential crime, the individuals can begin to make changes that impact their society. Through specific actions, they can make their families, homes, neighborhoods less susceptible to violence. Secondly, these kinds of assumptions about the influence of the individual encourage more positive attitudes toward the ability of citizens to be personally involved in the prevention of crime. This position strengthens individuals internally and empowers them to act with confidence and hope.

The third action entails specific behaviors. A few of these simple, yet effective actions, include "lock your doors," "turn lights on and off," and "don't use drugs." All behaviors presented in the PSAs are clear and concise. In addition, each PSA specifically encourages information-seeking action: "make it your job to learn about crime prevention. . ." and "write to. . .[address given]."

These three actions culminate in community emphasis, the fourth category. The announcements help create stronger community ties to protect the home and family. These may be addressed indirectly, as in the "Real Situations" (1989) PSA, or directly, as in "John Petross, Neighborhood Watch" (1982-83). The community involvement may be simple, such as asking a neighbor to "keep an eye on your house" ("Stop a Crime," 1980), or more complex, such as renovating old buildings and cleaning vacant lots ("McGruff Files, 1990).

The visual rhetoric of the PSAs creates a world view that is simple and basic. The announcements show a rational approach for organized actions in order to slow down the creeping prevalence of crime within neighborhoods. This enhances self-responsibility, a common theme in the idealism of America.

Furthermore, the PSAs address a common human desire to succeed. Success can be achieved by following the advice provided in the announcements. These recommended activities empower the individual so that the average citizen can be the hero who successfully acts in his or her own territory, removing crime and replacing it with a safe haven for family and friends.

The ideology of the McGruff PSAs shape the audience, but how members of the audience selectively appropriate what they most want from the PSAs, i.e., how the audience assumes the PSAs and interprets them, is more important. In this sense, the announcements become important resources of the populace. The most significant contribution of the PSAs is that through them the audience can reinterpret its history and reflect its own social relationships. What becomes important is how the individual interprets his or her role in the community and interprets the causes and methods of elimination of crime.

Simultaneously, creators of PSAs must always recognize that mass media ads serve not one audience, but several. These varying constituencies are constantly adapting the mediated messages to their specialized needs based upon the individuals' interpretations of their own community histories and relationships. This will be reflected in how each community enacts the recommended actions of the PSAs and assimilates the Crime Prevention programs to meet its specific needs. Any changes, along with the individuals' interpretations of their roles in and histories of their communities, will provide recommendations for changes in future crime-prevention campaigns.

Intertwined with the recognition of the different constituencies is the understanding that the audience is an active participant in the mass communication process. The McGruff ads assume that the audience is not passive; rather they advocate personal activities and responsibilities. The PSAs push the audience beyond the realm of simply participating in the media process. Instead, the audience is encouraged to perform specific behaviors within local neighborhoods. This shifts the relationship between the sponsor and the audience from a potentially paternalistic one (i.e., one in which media experts and law enforcement agencies care for a community) to one that is more fraternal (i.e., one in which community effort is shared by media experts, law enforcement agencies, and local citizens).

Conclusion

Overall, the McGruff "Take a Bite Out of Crime" PSAs appear as messages to have communicated with their audiences in a fresh and memorable way. The PSAs have met the first primary goal of providing content to potentially increase the *awareness* of crime prevention among audience members. For example, the "Real Situations" (1989) allowed the audience to become aware of impending dangers to children. PSAs like the introductory McGruff announcement in 1980 provided a basis for *reinforcing* existing behaviors, such as locking doors and turning on lights. *Motivation* among viewers could be encouraged by such PSAs as "John Petross" (1982-83). Here a member of the community actively fought against crime, as he adapted and implemented a Neighborhood Watch program to meet his local community needs.

Specific aspects of the campaign that would seem to aid in raising awareness, reinforcing existing behaviors, and developing motivation among viewers relied on two important elements: (a) emphasis on the individual and his or her community and (b) audience identification with McGruff. The PSAs throughout all fifteen phases of the campaign consistently have emphasized the importance of the individual by giving many of the messages personal tones such as *You* can help prevent crime. *Your* door, *your* house, *your* child, and *your* community established the viewer's sense of identity with and ownership of their homes and

local communities. In the process, the viewers can gain a sense of identity with the creators of the crime prevention messages. This identity can help them feel that "We--all levels of our society--are all in this together." Additionally, the PSAs have demonstrated an appreciation of the individual's concerns, fears, and problems regarding crime and crime prevention. Throughout most of the campaign, the PSAs recognized viewers as competent individuals who wished to assume responsibility for changing their neighborhoods.

In keeping with the concern for developing crime prevention through community efforts, the McGruff campaign has been based on the premise that as local neighborhoods build stronger ties, a new sense of community will emerge. In the process, it is intended that individuals will feel they have some control over their lives, as well as begin to care--about each other, about the neighborhood, about their schools, and other institutions. The campaign reinforces that this sense of caring can serve as one of the best answers to crime, suggesting that the solutions are within the community and that by working together, individuals in the community can make a difference.

The second important element has been McGruff. The Crime Dog was the central figure in the situational PSAs, and his personality created an important ethos that was essential to the success of the announcements. Over the years, he has been described as "believable, credible, trusted," and he has been established as a "role model" with whom audience members could identify. He lighted the heavy, emotional topic of crime and crime prevention. He reassured, encouraged, and supported individuals and communities. He was interesting and humorous, but at the same time always serious. But most of all, McGruff was always informative. Throughout, McGruff portrayed a sense of confidence as he offered positive, simple information that people could easily remember and steps that they could readily enact.

In summary, this analysis provides insight in the development of the campaign by outlining the varying visual and verbal rhetoric found within the PSAs and how they reinforce or detract from the overall goals for the McGruff effort. Specifically, the interpretation reveals how the PSAs may create public awareness; encourage public commitment to preventing crime and drug abuse, and building safe communities; and motivate citizens to take positive actions to strengthen social bonds and increase public pride in their community. The manifest content of the McGruff campaign aims to focus public attention on the vital issues of crime prevention and mobilize the public to deal with those issues. Most of all, these announcements appeal to what is most human in all of us, the desire to take care of our own. This suggests that these PSAs and their ensuing world views may be serving a ritual purpose as much an informative one for the audience.

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